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Parents have a responsibility in rearing their children to become mature, responsible, and useful citizens. Children should see and understand how groups become differentiated. Parents can also help children become secure within their own group, thereby lessening the threat of contact with people of other groups. Making the children loved, wanted, and happy members of their families and helping them appreciate their own heritages are two major ways of developing group security. A third parental responsibility is to aid children in growth toward emotional maturity. Good mental health is maintained by helping children to rationalize their disappointments and find substitutes for unattainable dreams, by encouraging them to test their aspirations, and by teaching them to accept gracefully defeat. Fourth, children must be taught to make decisions and to accept the moral obligations of their choices. Finally, parents can work with neighbors to create a community conducive to growth and development of all groups without sacrificing characteristic differences.

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REARING CHILDREN TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

BY DAN W. DODSON

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This pamphlet serves well as a supplement to NCCJ's penetrating and popular manual, REARING CHILDREN OF GOOD WILL, used widely throughout the country in study groups and workshops.

The concept of "Rearing Children to Meet the Challenge of Change" is indeed one which should be a major concern for those parents, teachers, and others whose values and behaviors have such strong impact on the formative years of children and youth.

Dr. Dodson points out that *we are what we do.* Actions reflect beliefs and attitudes. The author describes how group differences come about; the need for children to be at home in their own group and culture; how to help youth move toward emotional and spiritual maturity; and how all may work with other like-minded people in deepening our belief in unity through diversity.

There are some provocative ideas in the pamphlet which need to be more broadly communicated, discussed and evaluated. This is the purpose of the pamphlet—hopefully to develop a more adequate consensus as man strives towards the principles and ideals of Brotherhood.

LAURENTINE B. COLLINS, *Director,*
School-Community Relations,
Detroit Public Schools

Dan W. Dodson is Director of the Center for Human Relations and Community Studies of New York University's School of Education. He is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Educational Sociology, Vice-President of the Board of Directors of the Save the Children Federation, and advisor to the Board of Governors of the Ethical Culture Schools.

REARING CHILDREN TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

Dan W. Dodson

As parents, we desire for our children a better world than the one in which we now live. Most of us want them to take the heritage we are passing on to them and together with those of their generation from all lands, move beyond where we are now to a more creative life. We hope our sons and daughters will be:

> *Tall men — Sun crowned men*
> *Men who can keep their heads when*
> *those about them are losing theirs.*

For our children to grow into this kind of citizenship requires our help. We know our children must possess great ideals, for "without vision a people perish." But they must not become so rigid and inflexible they can accept no differences or change. They must learn to live in a world in which both change and differences are important facts of life.

What can we as parents do to help our children meet the challenge of change and differences?

1. *We can help our children see and understand how group differences come about.*

All children are born and reared in groups: families, churches, neighborhoods and nations. Such groups provide a culture in which a way of life is learned. Trager and Yarrow found in the study of small children in Philadelphia that at an early age, children were quite conscious of their differences as Protestants, Catholics, Jews, etc. The groups in which they were reared had taught them early to perceive their differences.

We are born into groups which predispose us, favorably and unfavorably, toward both people and things. Many of these social habits and ways of thinking are necessary and useful. Some are harmful and dangerous, both to ourselves and others. Children who will be capable of meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow will not only have to unlearn many of the erroneous conceptions they now have about other people, but will need to acquire, as well,

a questioning attitude as to *what is reality*, in order to insure that the cultural porthole through which they first learned to view the world does not permanently distort their vision.

IN THIS UNDERTAKING WHAT IS THE PARENT'S ROLE?

We can examine what are the stereotypes and pre-judgments we are inculcating in our children. "Have we tested them against reality for ourselves?" "Are we sure they are sound?" One of the greatest joys of parenthood is experienced during that stage of our children's lives when they begin to behave in line with family tradition — provided, of course, that tradition is worth emulation. As our children mirror us, their family, in their attitudes and behavior towards others, are we proud of what they mirror? Our children can do much more to take their responsible places in society if they do not have to spend a large share of their adult lives unlearning, the hard way, things they have learned from us as parents.

We may well ask ourselves, "Are we free of prejudices towards peoples of other races, creeds, or groups?" "Do we, ourselves, feel strange, insecure, and rigid when thrown in company with peoples of backgrounds other than our own?" or "Do we feel comfortable with most?"

Our children learn — in our homes, our schools, our neighborhoods, our churches, or our groups—*what they live* and not necessarily what they are taught. It does little good to *teach respect for Jews, for instance, if those* who teach refuse to live in neighborhoods with Jews. It does little good to teach about the Brotherhood of Man if the brother who is Negro is refused opportunity to worship with his co-religionists who are white. Children are quick to detect our insincerities.

A heavy responsibility rests on us as parents to find ways in which our children can get to know children of different backgrounds who possess deep and basic differences, and also to know people who may be different in some respects, but have large areas of common interest with us.

We may well ask ourselves how our children will ever be able to make decisions about world

affairs if they never know intimately people who are different from themselves. For instance, what are the handicaps for one who never had a child of another race for a playmate, a classmate, a neighbor or a fellow worshipper? The same could be said for other group differences such as creed, social class or nationality. As adults we are the principal bearers to our children of all that is the history, the meaning of life, the values, hopes and aspirations of the groups to which we belong. Some of this, however, may be dead tonnage and may be dangerous to ourselves and others.

Undoubtedly we would all do our children a real service if we could rid our own lives of those biases toward other groups which result from our misinformation, faulty logic and limited experience.

2. *We can help our children become secure in their own group so they do not feel threatened when they come in contact with peoples of other groups.*

All people have a need to belong to some groups and feel they are secure in their belonging. The social climbers who are not comfortable in their feeling that they are accepted by the social class to which they aspire are more likely to respect rigidly the amenities of that class than are those who are comfortable. Many superpatriots are people who are unsure of their relationship to their country — sometimes second and third generation people. Some have observed there is no race prejudice in the South that exceeds that of some persons from the North who migrated there and aspire to be accepted by the Southern society. Such manifestations of insecure membership in basic groups are varied.

Still another group insecurity was observed by Kurt Lewin among minority peoples as "group self hate." Here the person tends to reject his own group and its culture and idealize the culture of other groups. Kenneth and Mamie Clark did a study in which they presented Negro children with white and colored dolls and asked questions about them. These children tended to identify the white dolls as the clean ones, the nice ones, the good ones; the colored dolls they identified as the dirty ones,

the bad ones, etc. Such rejection of one's own group, and the idealization of the other, limits the capacity to appraise situations objectively and to make mature decisions. Pre-judgments are already "triggered" which will sway decisions out of line with what the facts in the case might otherwise warrant.

Another group insecurity might be called the "chip on the shoulder." When a person is insecure he must continually test out whether he is really accepted. Often there can never be proof enough, so in his anxiety he makes a nuisance of himself by demanding that his acceptance be proved. Almost every minority group has been accused at some stage of being "pushy" — because so many of its members have been caught in this type of insecurity. It should be remembered, however, that it is not minority group individuals alone who behave in this fashion. Many from majority groups do so, for the behavior is occasioned by one's feeling of relationship to his group, and not his ethnic background.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO ABOUT THIS PROBLEM?

a) The first and most important thing is to make their children loved, wanted, and happy members of their own family. Indeed, many would say that all the difficulties outlined above stem from lack of such a relationship. In hundreds of ways every day, children are learning images of themselves as people. This includes what the parents "image" as the status of the family, as well as the image the child acquires of himself as a person. "What would your grandmother say?" clearly represents concern about the family status. "What's your name?" "Whose little girl are you?" "Who is mama's little man?" All are terms of endearment and affection heard over and over in the home. They are helping the child develop a conception of himself.

Some of these roles become invidious. "We are better than the Joneses." "Tom is the smartest child of the family." "Eleanor is the prettiest." "Lois is the friendliest." Through these images, the child may come to feel that he is not loved as much, or does not belong in the same way as others, and the ground is laid for deep-seated personality problems that tend to

persist through life. We all say every personality is unique and creative unto itself, yet we as parents too often compare one child with another, to the disadvantage of uniqueness. Only one step removed from derogatory comparison of one child with another, our family with the neighbors', or our house with the neighbors', is the comparison of our race with the next, our religion with the next, and our nationality group with the next.

Compare we must. All of us must be proud of who we are and what we are. But to feel we are better than others because we are different is dangerous. It is grand to be able to say, "I have the best mother in the world." It is awful to say, "My mother is better than your mother." *The base on which all other personality maturity is laid is a happy, secure relationship to one's parents and family.*

b) We can help our children understand the history of the groups to which they belong so that they can appreciate their own heritage. No person can meet people of other groups and feel he is their equal without feeling secure in his own heritage. This led one Negro leader some years ago to exclaim, "The thing that would help our children more than anything else would be a good dose of ancestry." It was a way of saying that the white group would not accept the Negro person as an equal until the Negro person could accept himself as an equal. One major part of feeling equal is to be proud of one's heritage. The appreciation of this fact led Negro educators to institute Negro History Week, to emphasize what has been omitted from most text books, namely, the creative role Negroes have played in the historical past.

An understanding of this need to feel secure in their heritage led the British to supply children who were being evacuated during World War II with a little volume containing some of the precious documents of English history—the Magna Carta, passages from the King James version of the Bible, Shakespeare, Browning, etc. Hence, wherever they went, there would be a part of their hearts which would be "forever England."

Bettleheim and others have concluded that

a large portion of the social disorganization in America among second generation persons is due to the rapid shift from old world cultures to those of the new world. In the transition the "thread of historic continuity" has been severed in the personality of the individual.

We have helped a person when we have enabled him to appreciate his own cultural heritage. He will not need to "withdraw" with feelings of inferiority or "stick his chin out" in aggression, or shield his basic lack of inner security about "who he is."

A Negro mother in St. Louis admonished her child on his first morning of attendance at the desegregated school: "Don't try to act superior. Only inferior people try to act like there are people beneath them. Prove your worth; people will accept you, that is, the decent ones will."[1]

Security in the heritage can be achieved by repeating the legends about the family — who they are, what they have stood for, and what has been their travail, their aspirations, their disappointments. It can include study of one's religious heritage — not in a chauvinistic way, but in a quest to understand the search for God and man's relation to Him. It might include a study of other religions also, not to prove one better than another, but to help children understand some of the depth and richness of this search of man for the Highest.

Security in one's heritage can also be developed by a study of culture so that children understand that all peoples have culture, some more complex than others, but all with many points to recommend them. They could be helped to understand that differences of culture do not mean cultural inferiorities; that to all peoples their own culture is as precious as life itself. An examination of some types of cultural conflict would reveal that the complex task of preserving cultural differences and basic values is difficult for all of us as our culture changes.

In this day of extreme mobility of American people, when children are often far removed from their grandparents, uncles and aunts, etc., understanding one's family is not

[1] Valen, Bonita H. *The St. Louis Story*: A Study of Desegregation, Freedom Pamphlets, pp. 33.

easy. Neither is it easy to maintain strong group identification of other kinds. This places an even greater responsibility upon parents.

3. *We can help our children grow into emotional maturity so they do not use prejudice and hostility as a crutch for their own personality inadequacies.*

A stable and creative world will not be achieved by unstable, emotionally arrested personalities. Frustration leads to hostile, aggressive behavior or to withdrawal and self-destructive reactions. Sometimes when there is a less privileged group around, the frustration is projected toward them in hostile, aggressive behavior. The Commissioner of Investigations of New York City prepared a report in 1944 on some 27 cases of anti-Semitic behavior, where the culprits had been caught and case histories prepared on them. When one realized the frustration and rejection in the lives of these youths, he could understand that had their hostility not been channeled toward a minority group, it would no doubt have led to juvenile delinquency of some other sort. It so happened that in the communities where they lived, anti-Semitism was very great. Without doubt, for some, these anti-Semitic behaviors were among the very few of their activities for which they had ever received community approbation.

We cannot, even if we so desire, shield our children from disappointments. The task is rather to shield them from "overpowering frustration," and teach them to use frustration for creative ends. Good schools now provide not only games and activities of a physical nature, but clays, finger paints — material that can be destroyed — on which small children work off their aggressions harmlessly. As they grow older, they are provided with shops where frustrations can be vented on woodwork, plastics, and other less destructible materials. The child is thus taught patience as a part of maturity. In each instance the astute educator is providing growth experiences toward a type of citizenship needed in a modern world by siphoning off anti-social hostilities and destructive aggression from human relations and channeling their expression to harmless, valueless

materials. Gradually these are sublimated, or substituted for, to the end that frustration becomes a drive to socially useful purposes.

We know that people look for a scapegoat. It is much easier to blame one's faults and failures on someone else than it is to accept responsibility for one's self. Only the mature person can accept responsibility for his own shortcomings. The blood spilled to defeat Nazism — which sought in a helpless minority, the Jews, a scapegoat for collective frustrations—should be a reminder of the price we pay when bias toward groups becomes a crutch for personality deficiencies resulting from sick or immature emotional life.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Any of the above suggestions, of course, which contribute to healthy personality develop self-adequacy. The fundamental psychological point is that when an emotional drive is blocked, it may result in a variety of dangers. The wise parent will help find ways through which such frustrations can be dealt with to achieve good mental health. High among the things we can do is to examine our own "levels of anticipation" for our children. We want our children to reflect credit upon the family. All children, however, cannot make the honor roll in school, make the football team or win the scholarship to college. It is perhaps our own parental anxieties, that ours will not show us up well, that are most devastating of all for children. Above all else we should help them to understand that we love them whether they achieve their (and our) expectations or not. This makes it easier for them to accept their own limitations.

We can help them rationalize their disappointments and find substitutes for their "dream ships that didn't come in." We can encourage them to test, constantly, their aspirations so that they neither aspire to that which is beyond reality nor do they underaspire. If there is anything worse than getting hurt by aspiring too high, it is perhaps in never aspiring at all, never lifting the eyes to the vistas on the distant horizon and reaching for them. Lastly, we can teach them to take their defeats in good sportsmanship and profit from the disappointing experiences — using them as step-

ping stones to greater growth and achievement. It was Peter the Great who, when he was being defeated by the armies of Europe exclaimed: "They will beat us until they teach us how to fight, and then we will defeat them." Mature people learn from their failures as well as from their successes.

4. *We can teach children to make decisions and to accept the moral obligations of their choices.*

At birth our children are helpless and decisions are made for them. They should ultimately become persons capable of making responsible choices for themselves and accepting the responsibilities involved. Making decisions is not easy. All of us find times when we would like to have a "psychological papa" decide for us.

While we constantly use consultants, experts, and seek advice, after all the advice is in a mature individual must make his own decisions for himself. The pages of history are full of instances where nations, races, labor groups and others have entrusted the decision-making to others, to their regret. Charlatans maintain themselves in office by persuading people that danger is so imminent that they must not wait for decision-making to take place; they must simply follow. This relieves the average citizen of the responsibility for the choices made, and thereby relieves him of any feeling of guilt because of consequences.

The birthright of free men is their right of decision-making, and their hope is in the soundness of their collective judgments. Their greatest safeguard is in the growth of decision-making capacity and in moral insight which comes as they grapple with the problems which involve their destiny. There can be no moral growth unless there is responsibility for choices made.

What can parents do?

As parents we have to steer a course between two extremes in this relationship. We must recognize social immaturity and not force children to make decisions beyond their capacities. We must not shield them from decision-making to the extent that their capacity to

decide is stunted. One would not allow a small child to imperil his life by such action as jumping out of a high window, even though he desired to do it.

A technique of psychotherapy now popular is called non-directive. Here the therapist in the role of an authority simply asks questions that push the patient toward a clarification of his own problems, a formulation of his own goals and the ability to reach his own decisions. In the era of the authoritarian family, where father "wore the breeches," there was a tendency for father or the "father-figure" to make the decisions. He could never be challenged, regardless of how galling his decisions were for the remainder of the family. Children, and sometimes, wives, obeyed not from an understanding of why he wanted a thing done, but simply because he said so. In the democratic family, parents still resort to authority, but they measure their leadership more by how fast their children come to behave from self-made decisions which are based on solid knowledge of why they should act as they do. Parents increasingly lead their children with age and experience, to make their own decisions, by assisting them to assess all the possibilities and implications of their own decisions.

5. *We can encourage children to learn the art and skill of handling relationships.*

The skillful handling of group differences in the years ahead will perhaps be the most essential art we as a people will need to acquire. The nature of conflict arising over differences must be understood, ways of preserving differences which people feel are essential, and skill of social process must be found.

"Come, let us reason together," has been for a long time a familiar phrase to men of good will. In recent years we have seen the growth of the mediator in labor relations, and in other types of continuing conflict. We have developed skills such as how to participate in discussion, how to respect differences, how to learn that there are things about which honest people must agree they disagree. We are learning that there are rarely issues which are black or white, right or wrong. Most often there are shades of gray in between. The art of compromise; the

skill to select limited objectives when groups are in conflict; stress upon what groups have in common while they are battling over items of difference; negotiation, conciliation, and adjudication — these are skills we need to practice from early childhood.

AS PARENTS —

We can help our children with these skills if we make of our own home a training place for democracy. Many families set aside a time each week for a family conference. Here the expression of differences, gripes, frustration and criticisms is encouraged. Wise parents know it is better to let them come out than to repress them. Group decisions are reached, conflicts resolved, and goals reformulated. Out of these experiences come children who respect the right of other people to differ, and who have skills for dealing with difference—to meet the challenge of change. Thus practice of responsible citizenship begins in the home, and extends as members of the family move outside the home.

6. *We can work with the neighbors to create "community" where ours and our neighbor's children will have demonstrated to them how the good life can be achieved without sacrificing basic differences.*

None of us can do the best job of rearing our children without the help of neighbors and neighbors' children. The climate of the community in which we live frequently is such that much of the positive we do in human relations is neutralized by it. Our community is the first place where our children meet people of other groups than their own family. This can foster moral and spiritual growth and development, or it can be deleterious. It is something any of us, with a little effort, can do something about. What can we do?

(1) We can see that all the children of our community have adequate services such as good schools, good recreation, adequate programs in agencies and organizations that will give them direction, values, and sublimation for their aggressions.

(2) We can work with our friends and

neighbors to build understanding in youth as to what are the sanctions of behavior in the community, so there is a respect for the limits of authority established by the group.

All persons need to understand clearly what the community will stand for, and what it will not stand for as desirable behavior. Beyond what is right and wrong is the other problem of what can one get away with. Many people know what they should declare as income tax, for instance. They frequently declare, however, that which they cannot "get away with." Educators know when a substitute teacher is sent into a classroom, there will be little work done the first day. The children will be trying the new teacher out to see how far they can go. So it is in community. Youths are continuously testing the perimeters of authority. If they find vacillation or equivocation, they are headed for trouble. If police wink at certain kinds of behavior, if they do not enforce the law among all alike, if there is inconsistency among parents as to when children shall come home from parties, if there is open discrimination or flouting of the civil rights of some of the people of the community, the youth may find difficulty discerning what his role should be. A democracy does not mean the absence of authority. It means that the seat of authority is the people. Every citizen has a role in helping establish what is the authority of his community and nation. This responsibility no citizen can escape. He may decide to abdicate his responsibility, but he cannot abdicate the moral consequences attendant upon his choices.

It is here that we face the acid test of citizenship. Almost every parent wants the very best for his own children. Sometimes he is much less concerned about what his neighbor's children get — especially if the neighbor is of some other group identification. It is here we are called upon to show that we mean what we say about our concern for all the children of the community. From this starting point we ultimately have to ask it about all the children of the world. It is here that we have to show that we believe in the principle of difference. In so many instances we are willing to help if those served will become like us. If we really believe in people, we must be willing to help without

controlling and have faith enough to believe that if people are allowed to grow to maturity, unique in their own heritage, they will not only have richer lives themselves, but will enrich the lives of everyone else.

Community forces either work toward a way of life which will aid children to understand each other, or they work against it. Agencies such as the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Mayor's committee on good will, and other national and local groups are working in countless communities to achieve a helpful climate of life. Support of these agencies would be a great help in many instances.

TOWARD BROTHERHOOD

The attempt in this statement has been to deal with problems of difference. However, we have many more things in common than we have differences. Practically all of us believe that spiritually we are brothers. Most of us believe that there are potentials in each of us, which are unique to us alone, if there could only be found the magic to unleash them. Some of us are afraid to see that creativeness unleashed in some part of the people. We feel threatened by it. This is immaturity on our part.

We can help our children 1) to respect the dignity and worth of human personality, although it may differ from their own radically, 2) we can brush the faulty pre-conceptions from their eyes, so they see and learn to correct their vision, 3) we can give them a firm grounding in their own heritage so they neither quail nor overcompensate for their own background, 4) we can help them to acquire a basic emotional stability, so their decisions will not be clouded by their own maladjustments, 5) we can train them in decision-making, so they will not sell their democratic birthright, 6) we can assist them to acquire the arts and skills of negotiation, so they learn how to wait out the reconciling of differences, and 7) add to these the ability to create communities more conducive to growth and development. We shall continue to have our differences. They will not be "watered down." But to our spiritual kinship will be added the skills and maturity with which to forge ever new and more creative designs of life, so that human personality — will become increasingly God-like.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIANS & JEWS
43 West 57th Street • New York 19, N. Y.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS?

NCCJ is a civic organization engaged in a nation-wide program of intergroup education. It enlists Protestants, Catholics and Jews who without compromise of conscience or of their distinctive and important religious differences work together to build better relationships among men of all religions, races and nationalities. Its operation is civic and social although, obviously, the roots of the brotherhood which it seeks to build are in the moral law and in religious faith.

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